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Citation style: Bogdanowska-Jakubowska Ewa. (2021). The discursive representation of places significant for an individual : an analysis of Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses. W: P. Biały, M. Kuczok, M. Zabawa (eds.), „Various Dimensions of Place in Language Studies”. (S. 118-137). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. DOI: 10.31261/PN.4040



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Chapter 6

The discursive representation of places significant for an individual: An analysis of Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses

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The aim of the study is to conduct an analysis of the discursive representation of places in Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses. The representations of places have been divided into two categories, depending on the function of the place involved: (1) place as an element of the context of situation; and (2) place contributing to the formation of the individual identity. The analysis of selected academic year inauguration speeches delivered in Polish universities and commencement speeches delivered in American universities has been conducted within *the Discourse-Historical Approach*, one of the main approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis.

Key words: place, context of situation, identity, metaphor, academic year inauguration speech, commencement address, Polish culture, American culture, Critical Discourse Analysis

6.1 Introduction

Discourse is often conceived by discourse analysts as “text in context” (Reisigl 2018: 53). *Place (location/the physical surroundings)* constitutes an integral element of context of situation, which together with its other elements, such as time, occasion, participants, their social roles, gender, age, profession, education, ethnicity, nationality and religion, has an impact on the form and content of the discourse produced.

People’s place of birth, school, university, hometown, region and country play a significant, formative role in their lives. These places contribute to the

construction of individuals' identities. To answer the question *Who am I?* people label themselves in many different ways, using different words and expressions and making references to places important to them (cf. Barker and Galasiński 2001; Machin and van Leeuwen 2008).

The aim of the study is to investigate how such places are depicted in academic year inauguration speeches delivered in Polish universities and commencement addresses delivered in American universities. The analysis will be conducted within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak 2001; Wodak et al. 2009), committed to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

6.2 Place—an attempt to define the concept

Place is a complex social construct which is a combination of personal experiences and socio-cultural representations implied by public discourse.

Place is the setting for social rootedness and landscape continuity. Location/space represents the transcending of the past by overcoming the rootedness of social relations and landscape in place through mobility and the increased similarity of everyday life from place to place (Agnew 2011).

For different individuals performing different social roles, places are associated with different meanings, identities, activities, types of discourse and patterns of linguistic behaviour. Place understood in this way has an impact on the character of social interactions and discourse produced, and plays a significant role in the formation of identities.

6.2.1 Place as a category of contextual Settings

Context is a multi-faceted concept, defined in different ways depending on the perspective taken by the researcher. Anita Fetzer (2012: 461) maintains that “[c]ontext is imported into discourse, it is invoked in discourse, and it is necessary to construe textual coherence. Consequently, an analysis of discourse is connected intrinsically with an analysis of context: context is a constitutive part of discourse, and discourse is embedded in context”. Place is one of the contextual categories. Social factors and institutional frames of a particular context of situation, including place (e.g. university settings), determine activity type (e.g. commencement) and discourse genre (e.g. academic year inauguration speech, commencement address).

Production and comprehension of text and talk involve context of situation, including, among others, such conventional, culturally based categories as

participants' identities and roles, place and time, action, goals and knowledge. Contexts are mental models which allow fast interpretations of unique, ongoing communicative events (van Dijk 2008: 16). Teun van Dijk (2009: 47) distinguishes three basic types of places: (a) personal and interpersonal places, (b) social places and (c) geographical places. *Personal and interpersonal places* define the physical location of the speaker and his/her interlocutors in face-to-face interaction (Hall 1959; Hayduk 1994; van Dijk 2009). *Social places* can be defined in terms of what people collectively do in such places, in everyday life, at home, at work, and during leisure time (van Dijk 2009), and in terms of categories of people who work or visit such places. They are "involved in the assignment of social identities" to people frequenting them, especially to the professionals working there (van Dijk 2009: 49). Different social places, e.g. educational institutions such as universities, can offer different opportunities, create specific norms of behaviour and impose constraints concerning interactions and discourses "taking place" there (Lefebvre 1991). *Geographical places* combine social, political and cultural dimensions (van Dijk 2009). They provide the information where we and others are, but also assign socio-cultural and national identities to us. Each of the three types of places is larger than the previous one; together they form concentric circles with the speaker in their centre (ibid.). All the places, social interactions which take place there, and people's identities related to such places, constitute the contextual basis for the production and interpretation of the discourse produced (cf. Schiffrin 2006: 103).

Places may trigger emotions, both positive and negative. The so-called "our" places, such as our home, city, country usually evoke positive feelings and evaluations, as we identify with them. However, identification with a place does not always have to be the result of positive experience; as a consequence such a place can be associated with strong negative feelings (cf. van Dijk's concept of *place attachment*, 2009). Emotions triggered by a particular place influence the discourse produced.

6.2.2 Place as an element contributing to the formation of identities

A person's self-concept is typically represented as a set of self-aspects (*multiple selves*) (Showers and Zeigler-Hill 2003). In the unity of the self there is multiplicity of identities. The multiple self-concept usually includes distinct social roles, contexts, relationships, activities, traits, and states, and varies from individual to individual (Showers and Zeigler-Hill 2003).

The multiple aspects of self differ from one another in emotional valence (cf. Turner 2007). The more distant the element is from the ego, the smaller impact it would have on the person's identity and the weaker emotional con-

sequences of its foregrounding will be during social interaction. The elements belong to six main categories (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2016: 38):

1. *Personhood* (character, behaviour, moral integrity, biography, independence, appearance);
2. *Prestige* (social status, deeds, education, job, achievements);
3. *Competence* (abilities, knowledge, skills);
4. *Family* (parents, children, husband/wife, relatives);
5. *Affiliation* (nationality/ethnicity, world-view, religion, sexual orientation, social group, profession, beliefs);
6. *Background* (place of birth, place of living, schools, friends, interests, property).

The first three categories (Personhood, Prestige and Competence) refer to the self as an individual, the other three categories (Family, Affiliation and Background) refer to the self as a group member and the self in relationship with the outer world. The Background category makes the self-image complete, providing the details which may have an explanatory function and justify the individual's identity expectations (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2016: 38–39). The category includes different places significant for individuals' biographies, who they become and how they are perceived by others.

Thus, identities are constructed not just in terms of gender, age and profession, but also in terms of space and place. Space and place function as tools by means of which individuals construct, negotiate and perform their identities (Halford and Leonard 2006: 10–11). A particular place can have many meanings and the meanings can sometimes be conflicting. People can interpret them differently. "Place shapes our reception, understanding and interpretation of discursive resources available for the construction of working identities *and* place itself offers distinctive resources for the narration of self" (Halford and Leonard 2006: 51).

In short, the construction of our identities, which are emotionally charged and changeable, and their perception by other people vastly depend on contexts (our significant places included), which "control both how we speak or write, and how we understand discourse" (van Dijk 2009: 201; Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2018).

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 The Discourse-Historical Approach

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), developed in the 1990s by Ruth Wodak and her Vienna group, is one of the main approaches to Critical Discourse

Analysis (CDA). In CDA, “through discourses, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them” (Wodak et al. 2009: 9). Discourse is a multiperspectival concept (i.e. a discourse includes various perspectives on social reality) (Reisigl 2018).

The DHA combines “sociolinguistics and studies on narration, stylistics, rhetoric and argumentation with historical and sociological research” (Reisigl 2018: 45). It is an interdisciplinary approach based on ideas of the Frankfurt school (Jurgen Habermas in particular), Michael Halliday’s model of Systemic Functional Linguistics, and ethnography. It is a problem-oriented approach which goes beyond the linguistic dimension and includes the historical, political and sociological dimensions in the analysis and interpretation of a specific discursive event (Wodak and Reisigl 2015). The interpretation of discourses and texts is integrated with the analysis of four layers of context (Wodak 2001: 67):

- the immediate linguistic co-text;
- the intertextual and interdiscursive references in the text;
- the extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific context of situation;
- the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts.

Thus, particular utterances made by the speakers are analysed with respect to their linguistic context. Academic year inauguration speeches and commencement addresses are investigated in terms of references made to other texts and discourses. Intertextuality (textual features of one text reappear in another) and interdiscursivity (“the connection of a discourse to other discourses, that is, to other sub-topics” (Reisigl and Wodak 2009: 90)) allow for new fields of action. Another type of references in the text is recontextualization, in which “an element from one text is decontextualized and inserted into another”; the recontextualized element usually gets a new meaning (Flowerdew 2018: 166). Academic year inauguration and commencement ceremonies organized in the university settings provide frames for the discourse event (context of situation). The last, most external, layer of context combines the past and the present, involving history (the history and traditions of the university, town, region, country and nation, with their heroes and landmarks), the current socio-political situation and the ongoing (discursive) events having an impact on the members of the society. In the DHA, textual meanings and structures are analysed in terms of three dimensions: (1) the topics which the texts are about, (2) discursive strategies which are employed, and (3) the linguistic means which are used to realize the topics and strategies (Wodak 2001; 2011).

Metaphors and metonymies are employed “in connection with constructive discursive strategies” (Wodak et al. 2009: 43). Since Aristotle’s *Art of Rhetoric* (1991), metaphor, commonly used in public discourses, has been considered one of the most important rhetorical devices (Musolff 2012). It is by means of meta-

phors and metonymies that opinions and ideologies are frequently expressed (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and Tomaszczyk 2012). Within cognitive linguistics, metaphor is defined as “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system’. The term ‘metaphorical expression’ refers to a linguistic expression (a word, phrase or sentence) that is the surface realization of such a cross-domain mapping” (Lakoff 1993: 203). One of the central principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is the emphasis on “experiential motivation” (Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are patterns of conceptual associations. Metonymy is defined as “a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain” (Kövecses 2010: 173). Due to the frequent use of metaphor as an argumentative device in public discourse, some researchers suggest combining CMT with CDA (e.g. Charteris-Black 2004; Hart 2008; Musolff 2012). However, the motivation for the use of metaphors is different: in CMT metaphors are motivated by bodily experience, while in CDA they express the speaker’s rhetorical intentions and are selected to achieve particular communicative goals within a particular context (Charteris-Black 2004: 247; Hart 2008).

6.3.2 A corpus of linguistic data

In the study two linguistic corpora have been used: the corpus of 37 speeches delivered during academic year inauguration ceremonies in Polish universities in the years 2008–2017, and the corpus of 50 commencement addresses delivered during 2016 and 2017 graduation ceremonies in American universities. The speeches in the two corpora represent two different genres of ceremonial discourse which are culture-specific. However, they have a lot in common. Both can be identified as an epideictic oratory which fulfills a laudatory purpose (Reisigl 2008; Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2020). They constitute a “celebration of communal values and traditional beliefs” (Braden and Mixon 1988: 44; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971). As epideictic speeches, they perform the educational function: “the orator’s praising virtuous acts [...] moves the audience to admiration; [...] the value system of one generation is passed on to the next” (Sullivan 1993: 115). Academic year inauguration speeches as well as commencement addresses constitute elements of academic rituals marking the boundaries of academic year: inauguration speech—its beginning, commencement address—its end. They are recognizable communicative events which occur in similar settings (the university); they are characterized by a set of communicative purposes, such as celebrating academic life and achievements (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993). Both types of speeches, as representatives of the epideictic genre, have a ceremonial character and their main function is to eulogize the occasion. The speakers

are notable figures of academia and the society, while the audience consists of students, university authorities, members of the faculty and guests of honor (in the case of inauguration); and graduates, their families and friends, university authorities, and members of the faculty (in the case of commencement).

6.4 An analysis of the discursive representation of places significant for an individual in Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses

Representations of places in Polish inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses have been divided into two categories, depending on the function of the place involved:

- place as an element of the context of situation;
- place contributing to the formation of the individual identity.

6.4.1 Place as an element of context of situation

As van Dijk (2008: 20) claims, contexts are “crucially egocentric”; they are the “center of my/our world”, and are defined by the “here and now” of the ongoing act of communication. Ego as the speaker decides which perspective is taken. The ego perspective is reflected in the use of spatial and temporal deictic expressions. The speakers usually make references to the deictic centre—the place in which they deliver the speech; this constitutes part of the ritual and is an expression of respect for the host institution (the university or college) and the audience. References to “the place of delivery” (Reisigl 2008: 244) often fulfill a laudatory function; they include positive descriptions of the location, the university and the speaker’s state of mind (1–4).

- (1) *It is a wonderful day to be here at the University* (Schwarzeneger 2017)
- (2) *Welcome to this historic place on this absolutely glorious day!* (Paxton 2017)
- (3) *Budowę tej pięknej, barokowej Auli, w której odbywa się dzisiejsza uroczystość zakończono w 1732 r. W owych czasach słuchacze i profesorowie musieli być ludźmi bardzo młodymi, bo przeciętna długość życia w Europie wynosiła niespełna 30 lat.* (Ziętek 2014)
 “The building of this beautiful baroque Hall, in which the today ceremony takes place, was finished in 1732. At that time the students and professors had to be very young, because the life expectancy in Europe was less than 30 years’.
- (4) *Naszym celem jest, by UEP było miejscem jak najbardziej przyjaznym studentom, dającym satysfakcję pracownikom i możliwości rozwoju zarówno kadrze akademickiej, jak i studiującej młodzieży.* (Gorynia 2014)

‘Our aim was to make UEP the place most friendly for students, providing satisfaction to our employees and development opportunities to the faculty and the studying youth’.

To establish common ground with the graduates, referring to the location of the commencement ceremony the speakers employ different strategies. Those who are themselves graduates of the university recollect their own university years and talk about their own experiences and emotions on the same occasion, in the same place (5); or they share with the audience their memories of frequenting places on the campus or in the vicinity of the university (6). They topicalize positive meanings and describe positive aspects of the place, describing positive emotions associated with it (e.g. *pride*, *nostalgia*), and using positively evaluating expressions (e.g. *extraordinary*, *beautiful*).

- (5) *You know, I remember very well that moment of pride, of nostalgia, of regret but of anticipation, as you're leaving this extraordinary place and this beautiful, beautiful campus.* (Zakaria 2017)
- (6) *I made lifelong friends at UW, some of whom are here today, which I appreciate so much. We went to Badger games, dressed up as Mediterranean fruit flies for Halloween, sang and danced our hearts out in Humorology, suntanned on the Union Terrace on the first 40-degree spring day and occasionally we even went to class. After two years in the Lakeshore dorms, we lived at the SAE house and at the College Club, 151 steps away.* (Levitan 2017)

Those who have no links with the particular university resort to other strategies, such as the reference to the geographical location, the place history (*the original nine colonial colleges; one of the newest members of the Big Ten*), or to the place popular culture and traditions (*a Grease Truck for a Fat Sandwich*). Commencement addresses are “complex realizations of conventionalized linguistic action patterns with a clear interaction structure” (Reisigl 2008: 254). Although they have no transition relevance places, they can be characterized by a high degree of informality, the use of colloquial expressions and the pronouns *I* and *you*, and references to the speaker’s private life. The speaker’s words are ratified by the audience with applause, cheers, laughter and occasionally with positive individual comments. Manifesting the knowledge of local history and interest in local specialties has a phatic function: it signals friendliness and respect for the audience. The expression *on the banks of the Old Raritan* involves intended ambiguity: it is both a description of the actual location as well as an example of intertextuality: these are the words of the old song, Rutgers University *alma mater* (7).

- (7) *So I'm here, off Exit 9, on the banks of the Old Raritan – (Applause.) – at the site of one of the original nine colonial colleges. (Applause.) Winners of the*

first-ever college football game. (Applause.) One of the newest members of the Big Ten. (Applause.) Home of what I understand to be a Grease Truck for a Fat Sandwich. (Applause.) Mozzarella sticks and chicken fingers on your cheese steaks – (applause.) I'm sure Michelle would approve. (Laughter.) (Obama 2016)

In some situations the “here and now” is much broader. The deictic centre defined by the speaker is no longer a university campus, but a geographical place: a town (*New York, Washington, Warszawa, Kraków*), the homeland (*the United States, Polska*) or the world. The enlargement of the space that organizes the speaker's interaction with the audience involves changing the perspective taken in the discourse, from the local to the statewide to the global (cf. Hall 1959; van Dijk 2009). The place is not only the deictic centre common to the speaker and the audience, but also their common good, which they have to take care of (8), and a source of historical knowledge and moral teaching (9).

- (8) *Now, let's face it: The stakes feel very high today. And they are! Global inequality is worsening. Here, in the United States, democratic institutions—like the media, civil society, and even the academy—are under attack. And expressions of hate are on the rise.* (Walker 2017)
- (9) *Wasza dzisiejsza obecność przed Grobem Nieznanego Żołnierza, w sercu Warszawy, symbolizuje nierozzerwalną więź podchorążych z bohaterską stolicą Polski. Trudno wyobrazić sobie wspanialsze miejsce do złożenia przysięgi wojskowej niż plac noszący imię wielkiego Polaka Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego, którego pomnik stoi nieopodal, i Grób Nieznanego Żołnierza – symbol pamięci o żołnierzach, którzy oddali życie w służbie Ojczyzny.* (Mierczyk 2008)
- ‘Your today presence in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in the heart of Warsaw, symbolizes an inseparable bond of the cadets with the heroic capital of Poland. It is difficult to imagine a better place to be sworn than Marshall Józef Piłsudski Square, Piłsudski's statue standing nearby, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—a symbol of remembrance of the soldiers who died in service of our homeland’.

6.4.2 Place as an element contributing to the formation of individual identity

Although the name of the commencement speaker is officially announced several weeks before the ceremony, and persons to be the speakers are well-known public figures (e.g. politicians, social activists, businessmen, directors, actors), they always introduce themselves providing the most significant life facts contributing to the construction of their identities. Among the elements most frequently mentioned in their personal narratives, there are significant others (e.g. those who helped them and had an impact on their lives), circumstances

and places (e.g. their homeland, town, neighbourhood, workplace, school, university). Immigrants praise their new homeland; drawing an ideal picture of the country, they use praising expressions (e.g. *extraordinary*, *generous*, *exceptional*), superlative forms (*the greatest country in the world*), and they resort to old, common expressions (*the land of opportunity*). Talking about new homeland is often associated with the expression of positive emotions, e.g. gratefulness, enthusiasm, pride (10). Personal narratives include laudatory descriptions of local places significant for the speakers, e.g. gym (*a magical place*), university (*this unique oasis in the academic world*). Almost all the commencement speakers refer to their place of origin; the descriptions constitute a contextual basis for their personal narratives (12–14).

Polish inauguration speeches rarely include references to places significant for the speakers, other than the university (*miejsce tętniące życiem; nasz uniwersytet*), the town (*moje miasto – Kraków*), and the homeland (*Polska, nasz kraj, ojczyzna*). Talking about them is accompanied with the expression of positive emotions: pride and satisfaction. The differences between Polish inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses consist mainly in the almost complete lack of the personal in the former. Polish inauguration speeches are also more formal in style and hardly interactive. The speakers usually do not aim at constructing their own personal identity, but focus on creating a positive image of the institution—the university (11 is an exception, perhaps due to the speaker's cultural background).

- (10) *If I wouldn't have come to the United States, if I would have come to any other country, I would not have had the success. I mean, America has proven not only to be the land of opportunity, but America has proven to be the greatest country in the world. Anyone can make it!* (Schwarzeneger 2017)
- (11) *Jako polski obywatel z wyboru, a nie z urodzenia, chciałem podkreślić, że jestem dumny z mojej przybranej ojczyzny Polski, mojego miasta - Krakowa oraz z naszego Uniwersytetu, na którym będziecie studiować.* (Edigarian 2016)
'As a Polish citizen by choice, not by birth, I would like to stress that I am proud of my foster homeland Poland, my town–Cracow and our University, in which you are going to study'.
- (12) *I grew up in Nigeria. Mine was a very happy childhood, but it was also a childhood under military dictatorships. And because of that, I know how easily injustice becomes normal. I know how quickly, in the face of sustained mediocrity, we collectively lower our standards so that unacceptable things suddenly become 'not so bad'.* (Ngozi Adichie 2017)
- (13) *I grew up poor in inner-city Dallas–tough neighborhood.* (Brown 2017)
- (14) *I grew up black and gay in small, working class towns in the American South. I've known the sting of racism, the indignity of classism, the hatred of homophobia.* (Walker 2017)

Metaphors of place

Both Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses are conventionally rich in metaphors. In representations of places, the speakers often employ metaphors. Places are, as van Dijk (2009) claims, “social-physical locations-with-a-function”. The metaphors depict functions of the places (e.g. providing education and experience), and constitute conceptual frames for the speakers’ self-presentations. Metaphors are employed to discursively construct the speakers’ subjective realities (THE PLACE IS A SOURCE OF EDUCATION; THE UNIVERSITY IS A SOURCE OF EDUCATION) (15).

- (15) *I always say I got my B.A. from Stanford but my Ph.D. on the streets of Newark because I met people like Miss Virginia Jones, who was the tenant president of those buildings, and I went to work as a young lawyer trying to change the community, change the neighborhood, change the city.* (Booker 2016)

Places evoke strong positive emotions (e.g. love, belonging). The place descriptions including positive evaluations are embedded in narratives used to construct the speakers’ identities. A good knowledge of the place and the location of the university helps to establish good relations with the graduates. The speakers use cities’ nicknames (*the Big Apple, the Big Easy*), provide topographical details and refer to places frequented by students. The metaphors which are employed in such contexts include (16):

TO GET TO KNOW THE PLACE IS TO GAIN EXPERIENCE
THE PLACE IS ONE’S SPIRITUAL, ARTISTIC HOME

- (16) *Now I am not a New Orleans virgin. I have loved The Big Easy all the way back to when Taylor brought me here to introduce to the city he loves just as much as he loves his hometown of Los Angeles. In fact, the first words out of my mouth as we turned off the 10 for the Quarter and I looked down from the ramp were: “I want to die in this place.” For a while we owned a home here, and my stepson Rio started his bar empire here – Pal’s Lounge midtown and One Eyed Jack’s in the Quarter—and thank you for supporting it with your parents hard earned money. So, I am still a tourist here but one with history. New Orleans is my spiritual, artistic home.* (Mirren 2017)

While in (16) strong positive feelings for the place (town) are “private”, “personal” (the first person singular pronoun is used), in (17), strong positive feelings towards the state are emotions expressed by the concerned citizen (the use of the first person plural pronoun):

THE PLACE IS A COMMON CONCERN.

- (17) *I want to talk about the deepening concerns that I and many others have about the future of North Carolina, our beloved state.* (Gergen 2016)

Place often stands for the way of thinking. American personal narratives abound in the use of the metonymy THE PLACE FOR THE WAY OF THINKING. This especially refers to significant places which contribute to the formation of the person's identity, e.g. family home (*Irish Catholic household*), university or a place in which the person used to meet or meets significant others. The metonymy THE PLACE/AMERICA FOR THE SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT (*the American story*) is frequently used by immigrants who started their new life in the United States and have achieved success there (18).

- (18) *In my father's Irish Catholic household, it was a simple equation. Ditch digger to cop to lawyer to judge in four generations. My mother's Italian immigrant parents barely spoke English. Their granddaughter is a novelist. That's the American story.* (Quindlen 2017)

Success constitutes a desirable attribute of the person's positive self-image. There are attributes which help identify a successful person (e.g. a high income, substantial equity, a house/apartment in a posh area, a senior managerial position or a respected role in a professional practice) (cf. Machin & van Leeuwen 2008: 50). However, the meaning of success can vary in different cultures and different situations, and from person to person. Being or working in a particular place can also be a symbol of success. In the case of the metonymy BEING IN A PARTICULAR PLACE FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUCCESS, the role performed by the speaker is especially important. The opportunity to speak to the graduates as a commencement speaker and participate in the ceremony is considered a success (19).

- (19) *I grew up in Toledo hoping and praying to be a Rockette because I think girls grow up [thinking] the only signs of rebellion are show business, just like boys grow up with athletics as their dream. And I just want to say to my 10 and 11-year-old self: I'm on the stage of Radio City Music Hall now and it's better than being a Rockette!* (Steinem 2017)

Metaphors of university

In both corpora, university is represented, on the one hand, as a location, on the other hand, as an institution. The American and Polish texts abound in metaphors of university. And there are no significant differences in the way the concept of university is represented.

University as a place is frequently represented as home (someone's place of origin, the place where people feel they belong, a familiar setting). The metaphor THE UNIVERSITY IS A (SECOND) HOME is present both in American and Polish cultures (20–22). The English word *home*, the Polish expression *drugi dom* (a second home) and the word *podwórko* (backyard) belonging to the same semantic field, are used to refer to the university. It is also represented in Polish as *mała ojczyzna* (little homeland), meaning “a place an individual is emotionally attached to, because he/she was born/brought up or lives there” (wsjp.pl).

(20) *It's great to be back in Nashville. Every time I come back to Vanderbilt, it feels like coming home.* (Friedman 2017)

(21) *Ogromnie cieszę się, że mogę Was przywitać w murach Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie. Chciałbym, aby Uniwersytet od dzisiaj stał się dla Was drugim domem, Waszą „małą ojczyzną”.* (Górecki 2012)

I'm delighted that I can welcome you in The University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. From now on I would like the University to become your second home, your “little homeland”.

(22) *Na uczelnianym „podwórku” też mamy wiele poważnych zadań do wykonania w rozpoczynającym się roku. Są to prace długofalowe, które już rozpoczęliśmy, a zmierzające do efektywniejszego wykorzystania i modernizacji infrastruktury uczelni [...]* (Mierczyk 2008)

‘In our university “backyard”, we also have a lot to do in the beginning of the [academic] year. There are long-term works which we have already started, aimed at more effective use and modernization of the university infrastructure [...].’

University is depicted as one of the places which contribute to the person's development and the formation of his/her identity and beliefs. It is said to constitute an established standard and a point of reference for its graduates throughout their entire life. The way in which university is perceived is expressed by means of the following metaphors (23):

THE UNIVERSITY IS A PLACE OF ORIGIN

THE UNIVERSITY IS A PLACE HAVING A FORMATIVE EFFECT ON THE PERSON'S IDENTITY AND BELIEFS

THE UNIVERSITY IS A TOUCHSTONE

(23) *You may have heard that things didn't exactly go the way I planned. But you know what? I'm doing OK. I've gotten to spend time with my family, especially my amazing grandchildren. I was going to give the entire commencement speech about them but was talked out of it. Long walks in the woods. Organizing my closets, right? I won't lie. Chardonnay helped a little too. Here's what*

helped most of all. Remembering who I am, where I come from, and what I believe. And that is what Wellesley means to me. This college gave me so much. It launched me on a life of service and provided friends that I still treasure. So wherever your life takes you, I hope that Wellesley serves as that kind of touchstone for you. (Clinton 2017)

Both American and Polish speakers frequently use the expressions meaning “start, beginning”. In Polish speeches, they are employed to refer to the beginning of the academic year and the beginning of the first-year students’ academic education. In American speeches, the expressions refer to the beginning of the graduates’ new adult life and professional career. However, the starting point is the same, university (THE UNIVERSITY IS A STARTING POINT) (24).

- (24) *My career path started when I sat where you sit today. That was the beginning, but I am still far from the end. I continue to focus on Nasdaq’s mission and my own career mission – growing and learning and striving every day –every bit as much as I did when I was a brand new Owen graduate. (Friedman 2017)*

In the discourse analysed, university is a place/institution educating many smart, intelligent and open-minded people. In American culture, university is compared to a factory (THE UNIVERSITY IS A FACTORY) (25). In Polish culture—to a forge: *kuźnia (młodych) talentów/naukowców* (institution or place from which many talented people come) (THE UNIVERSITY IS A FORGE [BREEDING GROUND]).

- (25) *It is a privilege to be here at Berkeley, which has produced so many Nobel Prize winners, Turing Award winners, astronauts, members of Congress, Olympic gold medalists.... and that’s just the women! Berkeley has always been ahead of the times. (Sandberg 2016)*

The idea of *melting pot* is specific for American culture, it denotes ethnic and cultural diversity; in academic settings, intellect, knowledge and experience are blended into it (THE UNIVERSITY IS AN INTELLECTUAL MELTING POT) (26). In terms of cultural diversity, the situation in Polish higher education is considerably different: students in Polish universities are hardly diverse, even though it has recently been changing due to the programmatic internationalization of Polish universities. The university is perceived as a WINDOW TO THE WORLD (27).

- (26) *Every day, tens of thousands of students come here, to this intellectual melting pot, where ideas and cultures flow together among what might just be*

America's most diverse student body. (Applause.) Here in New Brunswick, you can debate philosophy with a classmate from South Asia in one class, and then strike up a conversation on the EE Bus with a first-generation Latina student from Jersey City, before sitting down for your psych group project with a veteran who's going to school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. (Applause.) (Obama 2016)

- (27) *[U]niwersytety powinny stać się miejscem integracji międzynarodowej. Siłą każdego uniwersytetu powinna być możliwość umiędzynarodowienia nauki i kształcenia tak, aby uczelnia była jednocześnie oknem na świat.* (Górecki 2012)

'Universities should become a place of international integration. The strength of each university should be its ability to internationalize science and education so that the university could also be a window to the world'.

Diversity in academic settings involves also free exchange of ideas. Both in Polish and American speeches, universities are represented as places where new ideas and social movements are born (THE UNIVERSITY IS HOME TO IDEAS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS) (28–29). Educational institutions, universities in particular, represent the implementation of the American ideals of freedom and diversity. The metaphor THE UNIVERSITY IS A FREE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS depicts university as a place in which these and other American ideals are turned into practice (30).

- (28) *This campus has long been home to movements for justice. Oberlin was a central stop on the underground railroad before the Civil War... and served as a rallying point for abolitionist action.* (Walker 2017)

- (29) *Jest on [Uniwersytet Jagielloński] także miejscem, gdzie powstają nowe idee, gdzie poszukuje się inspiracji do mądrej zmiany.* (Mania 2015)

'It [The Jagiellonian University] is also a place where new ideas appear, where people seek inspiration for a wise change'.

- (30) *At their best, our colleges and universities are free marketplaces of ideas. Embracing a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. That's our country at our best too. An open, inclusive, diverse society is the opposite of an anecdote to a closed society where there is only one right way to think, believe, and act. Here at Wellesley, you've worked hard to turn this ideal into a reality.* (Clinton 2017)

Due to the ceremonial character of the event, everything is presented in a positive way. In (31), there are references to three different types of social-physical locations: a city, a street and educational institutions. By analogy to the concentric circles mentioned earlier, it can be said that the greatness of the city is built on the greatness of its institutions (THE SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY IS A TESTIMONY TO THE GREATNESS OF THE CITY).

- (31) *And I moved on to Martin Luther King Boulevard in a great city named Newark. Now, King boulevard in Newark has so many, even there in the mid-'90s, so many great testimonies to the greatness of my city, from universities like Rutgers and NJIT to great county college, to some great high schools, arts high school and St. Benedict's.* (Booker 2016)

Traditionally, in many cultures (Polish and American cultures included) university is personified as *Alma Mater* (nourishing mother) (32). The metaphor THE UNIVERSITY IS A PERSON can also be found in other contexts: the university “beams with dignity” (*promienieje dostojęństwem*) (33) and is a partner and an ally (34).

- (32) *Early on, Berkeley opened its doors to the entire population. When this campus opened in 1873, the class included 167 men and 222 women. It took my alma mater another ninety years to award a single degree to a single woman.* (Sandberg 2016)

- (33) *Zadaniem uniwersytetu jest zdobywanie prawd i prawdopodobieństw naukowych oraz krzewienie umiejętności ich dochodzenia. [...] Służąc temu celowi uniwersytet promienieje dostojęństwem, wpływającym na niego z olbrzymiej doniosłości funkcji, którą pełni.* (Moryto 2011)

‘The university’s task is to find academic truths and probabilities and propagate the skills of finding them [...] Serving the purpose, the university radiates its eminence resulting from the magnitude of the function it performs’.

- (34) *The United Nations treasures its partnership with Columbia University. We are not just neighbors in New York; we are allies across the world.* (Ki-moon 2016)

6.5 Conclusions

The contrastive analysis of discursive representations of places in selected Polish academic year inauguration speeches and American commencement addresses has shown both differences and similarities. First, similar representations of place as an element of context of situation are present in both types of speeches, although they are much more frequent in American speeches. They fulfill a laudatory function, and include positive linguistic expressions. In both Polish and American speeches, references to the three types of places (personal/interpersonal, social and geographical) can be found.

Second, representations of places contributing to the construction of individual identity in commencement addresses outnumber those in inauguration speeches. This is mainly due to differences in the relation between style, the

place of delivery and the occasion. However, this can also result from differences between the two genres. The Polish discourse is more formal and impersonal; it includes very few personal references, not to mention personal narratives. As a consequence, there are very few representations of place of both types; representations of the university and the town in which it is located are the exceptions. The American discourse is more informal and diversified both in form and content. This is also visible in representations of places. Place as an element of context has different meanings, and, depending on the perspective taken by the speaker, is depicted as the actual place of delivery, the university, the city/town, the country, or the world. Representations of places significant for the speakers' identities form an integral element of the personal narratives and contribute to their positive self-image.

Third, the analysed discourse, ceremonial in nature and representing the epideictic genre, is rich in metaphors. They appear in the descriptions of places significant for the individual identity. These are metaphors of PLACE and metaphors of UNIVERSITY. As in the case of representations of place in general, metaphorical expressions referring to place/university in the American discourse outnumber expressions of this type in the Polish discourse, and are more diversified. This can result from (1) cultural differences and (2) the speaker's professional background: in the American corpus, the speakers are high achievers representing various professions (e.g. writers, artists, politicians, and entrepreneurs); in the Polish corpus, the speakers are predominantly scholars. However, there are many similarities in the way place and university are metaphorically represented. This mainly results from the understanding of the role of university as a social-physical location-with-a-function common in the two cultures.

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